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REPRESENTATIVE CASES OF NERVOUS DISEASE

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UNDER this head I will detail a few cases of diseases of the nervous system that are in some one, or in several features, representative in their character. They will serve to represent some of the leading and distinctive symptoms that are found in the diseases spoken of, as well as certain features in their progress and treatment. In all the cases, it will be observed, electricity was used either alone or in combination with other remedies, and some of the cases, it will be seen, illustrate the value of a combination of electrical treatment with internal medication.

Progressive Muscular Atrophy of the Right Hand, Three Years' Standing; Pain in Back; Numbness, and Coldness, and Neuralgia of the Arm; Disease of the Skin; apparent Arrest of the Disease under Galvanization of the Spine and Peripheral Faradization.

Mr. N., a gentleman of middle life, was brought to me by S. J. Holley, November 14, 1870. The patient, who had a strong constitution, for three years had been suffering from atrophy of the muscles of the ball of the thumb of the right hand. The disease had been gradual in its onset, and very gradual in its advance, and by various treatment—medi-

cines and faradization of the muscles—had been more or less modified. The atrophy was preceded by pain in the back in the region of the third dorsal vertebra. This spot we found to be tender on pressure, and also tender under the electric current. A galvanic current applied to the tender spot caused at once *a sensation in the affected hand*. There were in the hand persistent coldness and great numbness, with anæsthesia, and also impairment of the sense of pressure as determined by examination with the plesimeter, and there was enfeeblement of the sexual power. The coldness and numbness were first *felt six years before* in the track of the ulnar nerve; the pain in the back appeared five years before, and two years after that the muscles of the hand began to atrophy. At one time there had been evidences of an acute, or rather subacute, congestion of the cord, with the symptoms of numbness of half the body on the right side; anæsthesia of the rectum, so that the fæces were passed unconsciously, and severe neuralgia of the arm—these symptoms lasted one month. The first (and not very strong) application of the galvanic current caused insomnia that night; pain in abdomen, and mental depression, and anæsthesia of the rectum; one day following treatment he felt a sensation in his back, as though some one had suddenly and severely struck him from behind; gradually he became accustomed to the applications, which were made milder and shorter, and began to get better. There were less insomnia and better appetite, less pain and more warmth in the hand and arm. During the treatment, which lasted several weeks—about twenty applications—a *pruriginous eruption appeared on the back and shoulders, with great itching, with which came great relief of the pain in the spine*. The itching of the prurigo was itself relieved by the galvanic current. The disease was, to all seeming, arrested, although the atrophied muscles did not return to their normal condition. Eighteen months after the close of the treatment we met the patient. He was in excellent health; although the hand was still considerably shrunken, the sexual power had returned, and he had but recently married, having previously lived a bachelor, and he was in most excellent spirits. The features of most interest in the above case are:

1. It seemed to show the central origin of progressive muscular atrophy—long before the muscles of the hand began to atrophy there was evidence of spinal congestion at or near that part of the cord whence issue the nerves to supply the arm. For several years these symptoms had been existing before the atrophy was observed.

2. The fact that, when taken early, progressive muscular atrophy, grave as the disease is, may be arrested by galvanization of the nerve-centres.

3. The apparent relation of the pruriginous eruption and the morbid state of the cord. When the eruption appeared with severe itching, the patient at once improved.

The following case gives ground for the hope that writer's cramp, if treated early, might more frequently be cured :

Incipient Writer's Cramp in an Editor ; Profound Local Anæsthesia ; Rapid Relief under Localized Faradization and Galvanization of the Spine and Sympathetic.

Mr. H. C. B., aged sixty years, a prominent editor, was referred to me, November 20, 1872, by Dr. C. L. Mitchell.

The only symptom of which the patient complained was a numbness of the last two phalanges of the right index-finger. The electro-sensibility was so much diminished that a strong faradic current, which on the third phalanx and all the other fingers of the hand was intolerable, was but little felt on the last phalanx, and caused, indeed, rather an agreeable sensation. The æsthesiometer also indicated great anæsthesia. The muscles all responded well to the will and to electricity. The symptoms had existed about two weeks, and had come on gradually. There was no evidence of cerebral difficulty or of spinal sclerosis ; in all other features, except the numbness, and a slight feeling of weakness, or rather of nervousness in the arm, the patient was well. At that stage there was no tingling or pricking sensation, no neuralgia, and no spasms.

I made the diagnosis of incipient writer's cramp, partially by exclusion, and partially by the positive symptoms of numbness and weakness in the parts concerned in writing.

Faradization with sponges and the metallic brush gave immediate relief ; the first sitting did much toward restoring the

sensation. In nine days, five applications, only the last phalanx of the index-finger remained anæsthetic. This part was obstinate throughout, especially on the very tip of the finger.

The patient now felt that he was well, and closed his visits, still working as usual with his pen as hard as ever, almost all day long.

December 7th he reported a return of the symptoms of numbness, complicated with pricking and tingling sensation, neuralgia of the arm, and great debility. Long writing caused great uneasiness.

Absolute rest from writing was now demanded, and the patient obeyed, still using his brain, but employing a secretary. Again he began to improve under peripheral faradization and galvanization, and galvanization of the upper part of the spine and cervical sympathetic.

January 1, 1873, he was very much better—indeed, nearly well. That day he slipped, and fell down the steps of his house, and struck on the hand and shoulder of the affected arm. The shock lamed him greatly, and caused for a long time stiffness and much pain of the shoulder.

The electrical treatment was renewed, January 14th, and continued every other day during the month, with satisfactory results. The enforced rest—for the patient was confined to the house—coöperated with the electrical treatment.

Some of the most delightful results in electro-therapeutics are obtained in the treatment of certain stages of impotence, of which the following is a favorable illustration.

Impotence of the First Stage, of One Year's Standing; General Health Good; Entire and Permanent Cure under Six Weeks of Localized Faradization.

Mr. —, a gentleman forty-six years of age, consulted me September 28, 1872, for impotence of about one year's standing. He was living with his second wife, who had recently given birth to a child. His impotence was not absolute, but was annoying and to him alarming, and sorely he had been depressed by it. His occupation was confining, but his general condition was superb. Both desire and power were deficient, though not destroyed. The emission came too soon. I began

treatment by local faradization, by various external applications. He now began to improve, and by November 2d, after twenty applications, he regarded himself as half recovered.

The galvanic current was now tried, but he declared that it made him worse.

The current of the faradic machine of the Galvano-Faradic Manufacturing Company was also tried, and he fancied that it was more efficacious than the current from Kidder's machine. A few more applications completed the cure, which was permanent.

The treatment of facial paralysis of a peripheral origin by electricity is, as all electrologists know, most satisfactory; and in this disease the superiority of the galvanic over the faradic current is most brilliantly shown.

*Facial Paralysis, induced by Exposure to Wind and Cold.
Recovery under Local Galvanization in a Few Weeks.*

Miss B. —, a young lady about twenty-four years of age, was referred to me, June 25, 1872, by Dr. Corey, with facial paralysis of the right side, that came on suddenly three weeks before, when she was in the country. The exciting cause was clearly exposure to a cold wind while riding in the vicinity of Lake George.

The mouth was badly drawn, and on smiling or laughing the distortion was very great.

The constitution of the patient was exceptionally good. *Farado*-contractility was lost: *galvano*-contractility remained, even under very mild currents. I treated her by the galvanic current exclusively, with my current reverser, which is particularly convenient for cases of this kind.

July 16th.—After twelve applications the patient could move the side of the mouth a little and could close the eye. It was observed during all the treatment, that, immediately after a sitting—indeed, in the very midst of the sitting—the volitional power increased. A considerable portion of this temporary improvement wore away in the course of an hour or more, leaving only a slight margin that became permanent improvement.] It was by a succession of these slight margins

that the cure was effected by about thirty applications. At first the sittings were held every day or every other day. The patient returned to the country in August, about three-quarters well. In the autumn the recovery became complete.

The following case might be by some regarded as hysteria of the larynx:

Nervous Aphonia of One Year's Standing; no Visible Lesion, but Slight Tuberculous Deposit on Lung; Great Pain from Talking and Terrible Hyperæsthesia; No Relief under Central and Local Galvanization.

Miss B——, a young lady from Chicago, was referred to me by Dr. Johnson, of that city, December 16, 1871.

The patient was of a delicate, thoroughly American type, but no more nervous than thousands of our countrywomen.

For one year she had suffered from absolute aphonia. The laryngoscopic examination of Dr. Johnson, her physician in Chicago, and of others, indicated no local lesion that could well account for her symptoms, although a slight tuberculous deposit of a passive and stationary character was detected, by Dr. Clark, in one lung. All the accompanying symptoms pointed to a nervous origin of her disease. The hyperæsthesia was very remarkable. The patient said the pain from whispering was so great that, "when I try to whisper I suffer terribly, become dizzy, and have pain in my ear." "I often feel," she continued, "as if every word I whispered grated on the vocal cords, and to laugh would *make the cords ache*." Almost continually there was pain in the throat, and on this account her nights were wakeful.

The evidence was pretty clear that the nerves supplying the larynx were in a condition of great hyperæsthesia, producing a condition analogous to vaginismus.

In Chicago Dr. Johnson had used electrical treatment, with a view to excite the action of the cord, without benefit. Stable galvanization was used, mainly with the view of calming the irritability and reducing the hyperæsthesia, but without success. In about a month the patient went South for the winter, and I have not seen her since that time.

The injurious effect on the nervous system of working on sewing-machines was shown in two cases that were under my care at the same time, one of which is the following :

Cerebral Congestion in a Young Girl ; Attacks brought on when working on a Sewing-Machine ; Great Temporary Relief under Central Galvanization, Galvanization of the Sympathetic, and Bromide of Potassium ; Relapse under the Continuation of the Exciting Cause.

E. A——, a girl twenty-four years of age, came to me representing that, for four months, she had suffered from attacks of fullness of the head, flushing of the face, with burning feeling that came on, sometimes every day, especially in the afternoon and evening, when she had been hard at work on the sewing-machine. She was employed in a shop where she was expected to work all day on the machine. The constitution of the patient was excellent, and there were no evidences of uterine disorder.

I used central galvanization, galvanization of the head and sympathetic, and prescribed bromide of potassium internally, with immediate and decided relief, but the symptoms recurred when she returned to hard work on the machine.

Cerebral Congestion and Exhaustion induced by Over-Toil and Worry, following Cure of Catarrh and Nasal Polypi ; Terrible Insomnia ; Temporary Numbness ; Recovery under Galvanization of Brain and Cervical Sympathetic, and Internal Use of Cod-Liver-Oil Emulsion.

Mr. D——, a gentleman of middle life, a political editorial writer on one of our prominent Western newspapers; consulted me December 20, 1872, for persistent insomnia of a very aggravated character, that for one year had forced him to try all methods of treatment, including hydropathy, homœopathy, severe exercise, etc., with but little profit. The condition had come upon him as a result of over-toil in his profession, combined with mental annoyances of a most serious character. Formerly the patient had suffered from nasal catarrh (chronic rhinitis) and nasal polypi: *as the cerebral disorder came on, the catarrhal symptoms disappeared.*

The insomnia had been most obstinate: for weeks and months it had been necessary to use chloral, else there was absolutely no sleep; and recently the chloral had lost somewhat of its power.

I gave him a few applications of electricity, using the ordinary methods of galvanizing the brain and cervical sympathetic, and gave the cod-liver-oil emulsion. He was obliged to return to his duties; but he carried out the treatment faithfully, and now and then reported to me his progress. The improvement was constant and permanent. He got along with less and less chloral. In the course of a few weeks he wrote me that he was nearly well; but he adds: "The catarrh is coming back: the devil take it!"

One feature worthy of note in the above case was, the relation that appeared to exist between the constant counter-irritation produced by the nasal catarrh and the cerebral trouble. I have observed the same in other cases, but in none so strikingly as in this.